**Margaret McCain’s Remarks-Centreville Preschool Opening**

*June 18, 2013*

Congratulations to the community on the opening of Centreville Preschool. But today the spotlight shines on the graduating class of 2013. These youngsters are leaping forward from the most important education platform they will ever stand on.

Learning to get along with each other, to manage conflicts and solve problems are essential life skills. Learning to tell stories and talk or write about fears and dreams are the foundations of literacy. Water play, sand tables and building towers form the rudiments of math and science. Climbing ladders, throwing balls and other active play is key to physical well-being.

Enter a good preschool program and you can *hear* the learning happening. There is an energetic and happy hum. There is laughter and exuberance. Joining in are educators who are guiding it all.

It is in preschool that we learn how to learn. This is what makes Centreville Preschool and the best start it will provide future classes of preschoolers such a tremendous accomplishment.

For policy makers and service providers this space reflects new thinking.

You have taken this great asset -- a public school -- and expanded it to include younger children and their families. Rather than being fenced in by defined physical space, you have repurposed and shared, in response to community need. To you, working like this is now second nature. Why shouldn’t preschool aged children use the school’s gym and playground? Why can’t parents participate in child care programming? Yet in too many places this doesn’t exist. Schools space goes vacant while the community searches for places for young children to gather and learn.

Centreville Preschool happened because everyone made it their job to turn ‘no we can’t’ into ‘yes we can’. And getting to ‘yes’ has never been easier in New Brunswick. When the Early Child Development sites began it took the agreement of many different departments and ministers. Today those ministries have been combined into **one**, with oversight for early education, education and intervention services.

Setting up the sites took navigating through several layers of regional administration. Now there is one regional authority.

Instead of many policies emanating from many departments, there is one Early Years Framework addressing the needs of children from the prenatal period through to formal schooling. These are issues of governance. Integrated governance doesn’t solve every problem but it does make problem-solving so much easier.

As for the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation our work is evolving alongside progress in New Brunswick. The Development Centres were a three-year window to demonstrate and inform integrated early years service delivery. They are now rolling over into the new early years framework that has been adopted for the entire province. You enter this stage ahead of others; I hope you will continue to take every opportunity to transfer your knowledge.

This will be a big part of our continued role as well. We will be working with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to continue to share best practice in programming and professional development. We will continue to bring expertise from across Canada and internationally to help build momentum.

Building and sustaining momentum is a shared responsibility. I know you will continue to meet with your officials to share your findings and proposals – not how your site should be an exception but how it fits into the new early years strategy. With modern thinking and action I can see you becoming a national model.

This journey has involved many. Essential has been the partnership between the child care, family support programs, the village council and the school. But I would like in to acknowledge the contribution of Kelly Mclean Haley. There are particular challenges to providing programming in rural communities but with Kelly’s unique facilitation we are here today; not to look backward but to go forward. Thank you Kelly. Congratulations to you all.